

The Honorable Lourdes A. Leon Guerrero  
Maga'hågan Guahån  
MONTHLY ADDRESS  
July 1, 2019 "The Fight for War Claims"

*Håfa Adai,*

This month we celebrate the Diamond anniversary of Guam's liberation from Imperial Japanese occupation by United States forces. For nearly three years, beginning December 8, 1941, our people were unwilling participants and ultimately, victims of a war between nations. It became the living horror of our mothers and fathers, our grandmothers and grandfathers, and their friends and neighbors.

And while the wounds of war can heal, the memories of that time are entrenched in the emotional and physical scars of those who survived. But this time of year is about more than tragedy and pain. It's a living memorial to the loved ones we lost, to our liberators who fought and died so that others might live, and to the remaining survivors who are still with us today.

After U.S. troops claimed a bloody victory on Saipan, Japanese forces on Guam sensed their fall was inevitable. Consequently, their treatment of the CHamorus worsened. Countless stories of torture, rape, and executions now permeate our history.

1,170 CHamorus died during the Japanese occupation. 14,721 survived. 75 years later, only a fraction of those survivors are still with us.

After the combined effort of every Congressional Delegate from Guam, every elected Governor, and even a federal law signed by President Obama, the men and women whose courage and sacrifice were recognized by Congress are still waiting for closure 75 years later.

This is why as Governor I chose to take action after learning that more federal legislation is needed to release funding to award claims.

My Administration has built a relationship with the federal government. We have secured millions of new dollars for the Guam Memorial Hospital through a federal rebasing of our Medicare and per diem rates. We ended the decade-long federal receivership of our Solid Waste system; we secured the largest federal match rate of Affordable Care Act funds in Guam's history; we successfully renegotiated the per diem rate for federal detainees, which also had not been done in over 20 years; and we secured millions in federal grants in record time.

We recognize the hard work of other elected leaders and the support of our people in making our lives better. I also believe that there is a level of trust our federal partners have placed in my Administration. We are seeing a new wave of prominent Congressional leaders heeding our call for action. A number of bills have been recently introduced that could bring millions in funding to the territories: one by 5 Democratic Presidential candidates will bring Medicaid parity to Guam, and two

measures to reimburse us for Earned Income Tax Credits. We are seeing a level of trust, attention, and partnership. We must sustain this relationship moving forward.

With more of our manamko' leaving us every day, and this fortified relationship with the federal government, I knew we had to act on this rare opportunity that arose out of the Disaster Aid bill. Funds that we were identifying to put up as a match can now be used to start paying survivors through a local program.

Thanks to Speaker Muna-Barnes, Minority Leader Wil Castro, Senator Amanda Shelton and federal partners beginning with the White House, along with the Departments of Treasury, Justice, and Interior -- I am optimistic that we can make this program a reality.

And to be clear, Congressman Mike San Nicolas' legislation to release funding from Treasury is critical and necessary, and I am in full support of its passage.

We are all sons and daughters of Guam. We can think beyond the recognition of success and realize that what we have in front of us is bigger than our individual selves. Let us come together and reach for the good that will happen with our joint efforts. Together, we CAN bring closure to Guam's Greatest Generation.

Si Yu'os Ma'ase. Biba Liberasion, God Bless our manamko', God Bless our war heroes and their families, and God Bless Guam.

###